

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend claims 1, 6, and 11 as follows.

1. (Currently Amended) A method of handling frames in a network device, said method comprising:

receiving a frame at a network device of an assembly of network devices, with the assembly of devices divided into a first side and a second side and the network device being on the first side;

examining the received frame to determine whether the frame is destined for a member of a specific trunk group;

determining whether a destination device identifier for the frame corresponds to a ~~one~~ of the network devices on the second side; ~~and~~

forwarding the frame to a trunk group destination port that is local to the network device based on being ~~based on being~~ if the frame is destined for a member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier corresponds to a network device of the second side; ~~and~~

if the frame does is not correspond to the network device of the second side, determining an alternative destination port for the frame and forwarding the frame to the alternative destination port.

2. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the examining of the received frame comprises examining the received frame to determine whether the frame is destined for the member of the specific trunking group of ports providing connections over a high speed data port interface.

3. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the examining of the received frame comprises performing a lookup in a trunk group table.

4. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the determining comprises examining the destination device identifier contained in a header of the frame.

5. (Previously Presented) A method as recited in claim 1, wherein the forwarding of the frame comprises forwarding the frame over an interconnected Gigabit port of the network device when the destination port is the member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier indicates one of the network devices on the second side.

6. (Currently Amended) A network device for handling frames, comprising:  
receiving means for receiving a frame by a network device of an assembly of network devices, with the assembly of devices divided into a first side and a second side and the network device being on the first side;

examining means for examining the received frame to determine whether the frame is destined for a member of a specific trunk group;

determining means for determining whether a destination device identifier for the frame corresponds to one of the network devices on the second side; and

forwarding means for forwarding the frame to a trunk group destination port ~~based on whether~~that is local to the network device if the destination port is the frame is a member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier corresponds to a network device of the second side; and

if the frame does is not correspond to the network device of the second side, determining an alternative destination port for the frame and forwarding the frame to the alternative destination port.

7. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the examining means comprises means for examining the received frame to determine whether the frame is destined for the member of the specific trunk group of ports providing connections over a high speed data port interface.

8. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the examining means comprises means for performing a lookup in a trunk group table.

9. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the determining means comprises means for examining the destination device identifier contained in a header of the frame.

10. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 6, wherein the forwarding means comprises means for forwarding the frame over an interconnected Gigabit port of the network device when the destination port is the member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier indicates one of the network devices on the second side.

11. (Currently Amended) A network device for handling frames, comprising:  
a plurality of ports, configured to send and receive data frames, with at least one of said ports connected to other network devices of an assembly of network devices, with the assembly of devices divided into a first side and a second side and the network device being on the first side; and

at least one port interface, for coordinating actions of said plurality of ports;

wherein the at least one port interface is configured to examine the received data frames to determine whether the data frames are destined for a member of a specific trunk group, and

wherein the at least one port is further configured to determine whether a destination device identifier for the frame corresponds to one of the network devices on the second side; and

wherein the at least one port interface is configured to forward the frame to a trunk group destination port based on whether that is local to the network device, if the destination port is a member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier corresponds to a network device of the second side, and

wherein the at least one port interface is further configured to, if the frame does is not correspond to the network device of the second side, determine an alternative destination port for the frame and forward the frame to the alternative destination port.

12. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 11, wherein the at least one port interface is configured to determine whether the frame is destined for the member of the specific trunk group of ports providing connections over a high speed data port interface.

13. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 11, wherein the at least one port interface is configured to perform a lookup in a trunk group table.

14. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 11, wherein the at least one port interface is configured to examine the destination device identifier contained in a header of the frame.

15. (Previously Presented) A network device as recited in claim 11, wherein the at least one port interface is configured to forward the frame over an interconnected Gigabit port of the network device when the destination port is the member of the specific trunk group and the destination device identifier indicates one of the network devices on the second side.